

Chemical Weapons Convention



The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is an international treaty prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. The treaty came into force on April 29, 1997, 180 days after ratification by 65 countries. It is the product of decades of international deliberations and negotiations on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. As of March 29, 2003, 176 countries have signed the CWC and 151 of them have ratified its terms and principles.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) at The Hague, Netherlands is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the CWC. Specifically, the CWC forbids each States Party to:

- develop, produce, acquire, retain or transfer chemical weapons;
- use chemical weapons;
- engage in any military preparations to use chemical weapons; and
- assist, encourage or induce in any way, anyone engaging in any activity prohibited under the CWC.

The CWC also requires that each States Party possessing chemical weapons destroy them in an environmentally safe manner. It forbids the disposal of chemical weapons by open pit burning, land burial or dumping in any body of water. Deadlines were established for the destruction of chemical weapons. The CWC requires States Parties with declared chemical weapons destroy:

- 1 percent of the declared stockpile by April 29, 2000;
- 20 percent by April 29, 2002;
- 45 percent by April 29, 2004; and
- 100 percent by April 29, 2007.

The treaty imposes international economic penalties and other actions for nations failing to ratify the treaty and for signatories violating its provisions.

The CWC includes two provisions to ensure States Parties are in compliance with the treaty. The first provides for routine visits and inspections of declared chemical weapons storage, production and disposal facilities. The second allows States Parties to request

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an international inspection be conducted at any facility or location in any other States Party's jurisdiction to clarify concerns over possible noncompliance.

U.S. Participation in the CWC

The United States became a States Party when it ratified the CWC on April 25, 1997. As a States Party, the U.S. government is striving to meet CWC destruction deadlines while ensuring public and environmental safety. The U.S. Army's Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) (Provisional) is currently the international leader in chemical weapons destruction, destroying over 20 percent of its declared chemical weapons stockpile well ahead of the April 2002 treaty deadline.

The program has completed operations at the world's first full-scale disposal facility on Johnston Island in the Pacific Ocean. CMA also operates the Tooele Chemical Agent Disposal Facility in Tooele, Utah, as well as, the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (ABCDF) in Edgewood, Md. Construction of chemical agent disposal facilities has been completed in Anniston, Ala., and Umatilla, Ore. Construction of facilities in Newport, Ind., and Pine Bluff, Ark., are currently in progress. Blue Grass, Ky. and Pueblo, Colo. are in the process of construction planning.

Under the requirements of the treaty, CMA also is active in destroying non-stockpile chemical warfare materiel, such as recovered chemical weapons, former chemical weapons production facilities, binary chemical weapons and chemical samples.

The program completed the destruction of all M687 binary projectiles in July 1999 and destroyed 40 percent of former production facilities two years ahead of the 2002 treaty deadline.

In addition, CMA is supporting efforts to help the Russian Federation meet treaty deadlines. Through the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, the United States provides financial and technical support for the construction of a chemical weapons disposal complex at one of Russia's chemical weapons stockpiles. This support will facilitate the destruction of Russia's nerve agent stockpile, which will reduce a threat to U.S. national security and bring the Russian Federation closer to meeting its treaty obligations.